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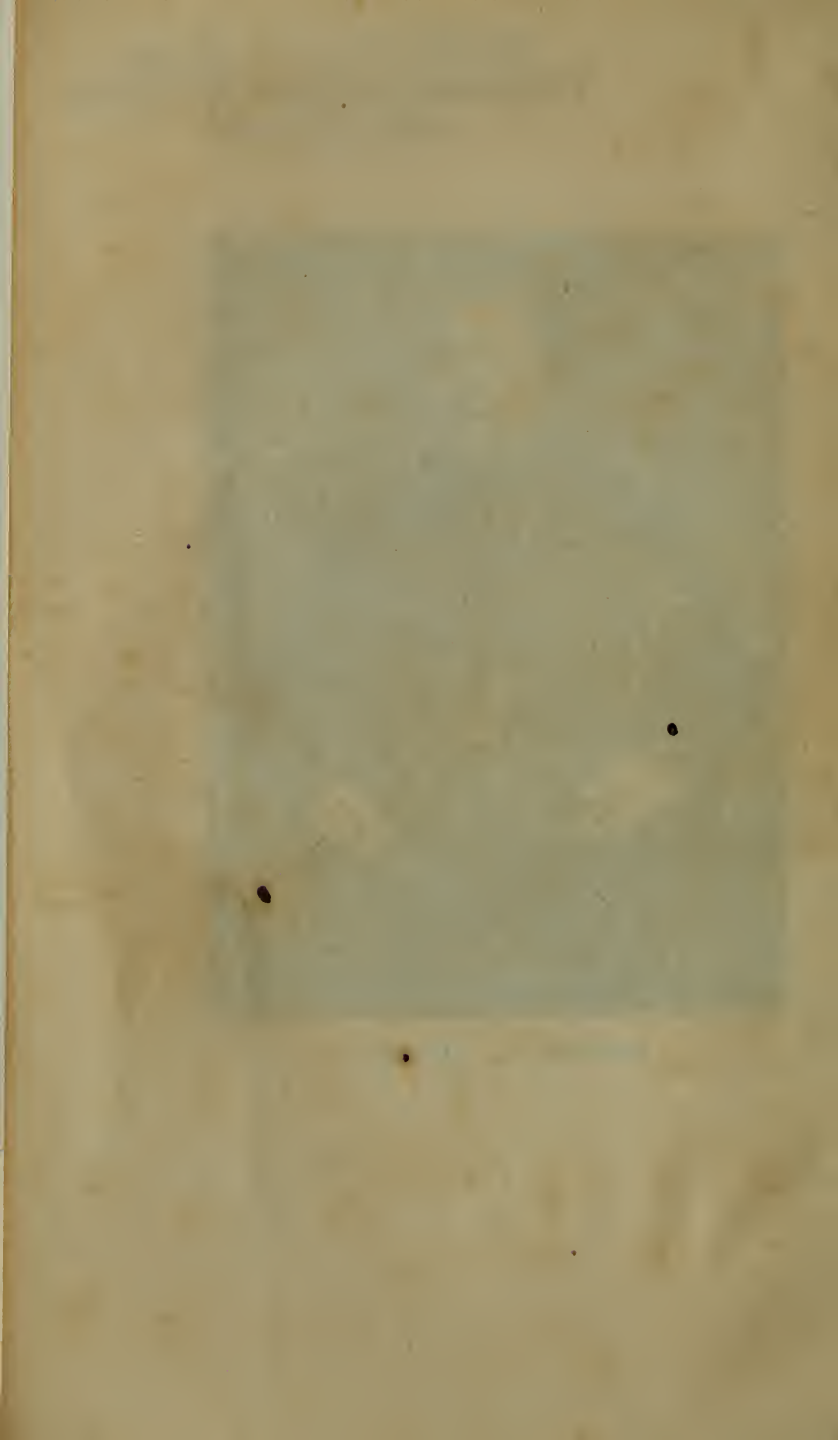
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PORTRAIT OF ROSSINI.

ROSSINI







Bell's Miniature Series of Musicians

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# ROSSINI

BY

W. ARMINE BEVAN



LONDON  
GEORGE BELL & SONS  
1904



## PREFACE

THE author desires to express his thanks to Sir Hubert Parry, Mus. Doc., M.A., for kind permission to reproduce the letter from Rossini to Sir Michael Costa ; to M. Georges Jacobi, for the facsimile of a portion of the score of the overture to *William Tell*, in his possession ; to Mr. H. Sutherland Edwards, for valuable information supplied ; and to the editor of the *Referee*, for dates kindly furnished.



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## INTRODUCTION

IN endeavouring to assign the place which Rossini is entitled to occupy amongst the great musicians of the world, it is necessary to bear in mind that he differed entirely from Bach, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and others, in that he was essentially an operatic composer.

Furthermore, he was before all else an Italian, and, in writing, his great object was to please the public which he knew so well. Having been himself a singer, he took particular care to write with due regard for the voice and its possibilities.

Complaints were made to him that his music was too noisy. His reply was characteristic: "When my music is being performed, I do not expect people to sleep."

It is a remarkable fact that Rossini, Mercadante, Pacini, Donizetti, and Bellini, were all born within ten years of each other, and the first-named has been justly described as the head and front of them all.

Whatever judgment may hereafter be passed on his works, there is no question that his *Barbiere di Siviglia* is the most brilliant opera-buffa ever composed.

To such singers as Alboni, Agnesi, Ancona,

Benedetti, Bettini, Botticelli, Capoul, Ciampi, Campanini, Del Puente, Garcia, Giorgi-Righetti, Grisi, Lablache, Malibran, Mario, Mierzwinsky, Maurel, Nicolini, Nozzare, Adelina Patti, Pasta, Pandolfini, Piccolomini, Paccini, Parepa—Rosa, De Reszke, Rubini, Sontag, Clarice Sinico, Scalchi, Tagliafico, Thérèse Titiens, Trebelli, Tremelli, Tamburini, and Tamberlik, he gave melodies which they could sing without damaging the voice. It is possibly due to the fact that the modern singer has not the ability to interpret the works of Rossini that they are so seldom heard in England.

In his time he was to a certain extent a revolutionist, and did much to amplify the operatic orchestra.

## LIFE OF ROSSINI

### EARLY DAYS.

GIOACHINO ANTONIO ROSSINI, the composer of *The Barber of Seville* and of *William Tell*, was born at Pesaro, a small town on the Gulf of Venice, and he uttered his first baby notes on February 29, 1792, two months after the entry of Mozart into eternal silence.

Since the year 1792 was a leap-year, and as Rossini was born on the extra day assigned to February, he felt justified in representing himself as only nineteen when he had already attained the age of seventy-six.

Like many other Italians, he regarded both Friday and the 13th of the month as unlucky days, and on Friday, November 13, 1868, he died. It was in 1865 that Meyerbeer's posthumous opera "L'Africaine" was produced, and the last piece of music which Rossini composed was a fantasia for the pianoforte on themes from his old friend's final work.

The illustrious Meyerbeer was so close a contemporary of Rossini's that the birth of the former—the elder of the two—was separated from that of the latter by only five months. The two composers were intimate and affectionate

friends from the year of *Tancredi*, 1813—when the admiring Meyerbeer made Rossini's acquaintance at Venice—until Meyerbeer's death in 1864.

Rossini's origin was of the humblest. His father, Giuseppe Rossini, was town-trumpeter, and his mother, Anna Guidiarini, the daughter of a baker. The little Rossini is said to have been for a time an acolyte and censer-bearer in the Cathedral of Bologna—a fact turned to ingenious account by Heine in his article on Rossini's *Stabat Mater* as compared with Mendelssohn's "St. Paul."

In 1796, during the political troubles which overtook Italy, Giuseppe Rossini made the mistake of displaying his sympathy with the French, who had invaded the States of the Church; the result being that he was deprived of his post and sent to gaol. His wife, obliged to support herself and child, took her little son to Bologna, where, possessing a voice of no mean quality, she obtained an engagement at the Opera. On being released from prison, Giuseppe Rossini (no longer horn-player to the town) sought an operatic engagement, and apparently found one at Bologna.

Gioachino meanwhile was obtaining musical instruction from a virtuoso named Prinetti, who, like many other professors of the pianoforte, had a method of his own. He taught his pupil to confine himself, in playing the scales, to the use of the first finger and thumb, though it is difficult to believe that for the middle finger suitable employment was not sometimes found.



HOUSE AT PESARO IN WHICH ROSSINI  
WAS BORN.





In 1804 the boy was placed with Angelo Tesci, who gave him instruction in singing and harmony, and, further, taught him to play accompaniments on the piano or harpsichord. Thanks to a good voice, the child of twelve obtained an engagement in one of the Bologna churches—this time not as censer-bearer, but as singer. He was thus enabled to earn a few shillings a week, which was the more fortunate inasmuch as his mother about this time lost her voice. Soon afterwards he was engaged to sing at the Communal Opera House in the “Camilla” of Paer, whose “Gazza Ladra” he was some years afterwards to put to death by composing an opera of his own on the same subject.

For this and other reasons of a like order, Paer in later years became one of Rossini’s bitterest antagonists. This was the same Paer, by the way, to whom Beethoven, after hearing his “Leonora, or Conjugal Love,” cruelly remarked: “I have heard your opera, and think of setting it to music.” In Paer’s “Camilla” Rossini made not only his first, but also his last, appearance on any stage.

On March 20, 1807, Rossini, now fifteen years of age, entered the Lyceum of Bologna, and received lessons in singing from Stanislao Mattei. But about this time his voice broke and his occupation as vocalist came to an end.

In August, 1808, Rossini produced his earliest composition, a cantata called *Il Pianto d’Armonia*. The success of this work secured him an appointment at the local academy, and it was here that

he conducted a performance of Haydn's "Seasons" —a work which made a certain impression upon him, since half a dozen years later he borrowed from it for the favourite trio "Zitti-Zitti" in the *Barber of Seville* the theme of Simon the labourer's tuneful air.

From Haydn the young student may well have turned his attention to Mozart, who, equally with the earlier German master, was to be laid under contribution for the enrichment of *The Barber*, for which its composer evidently thought nothing could be too good. To show his appreciation of the melodies so abundant in Mozart's "Zauberflöte," Rossini appropriated, from one of them at least, the idea and form of Figaro's "Largo al factotum."

The young Italian studied his German masters in earnest, and the important innovations he was to introduce into Italian Opera were nearly all derived from Mozart. The composer of *Il Pianto d'Armonia* had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of the Marquis Cavalli, who directed the Opera House of Sinigaglia, as well as that of the San Mose Theatre at Venice. It was for this latter house that Rossini (now eighteen years of age) received a commission to compose a one-act opera-buffa, which was produced in the autumn of 1810 under the title of *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*. The composition of this work brought him in something less than £10. But the trifle made its mark, and the year following the composer wrote for the Teatro del Corso of Bologna an opera-buffa in two acts, called

*L'Equivoco Stravagante*, and the year afterwards, for Venice, *L'Inganno Felice*—the first of Rossini's works to make its way to Vienna and Paris.

In the year 1812 the now successful composer, who was already receiving proposals from Milan, Rome, and Naples, produced for Lenten performance an oratorio entitled *Ciro in Babilonia*, which made no very favourable impression. Indeed, it fell so flat that its composer regarded it as an utter failure, though he saved from its ruins the melody of one of its choruses, which, after a second presentation in *Aureliano in Palmira*, was at last to become known to all lovers of Rossini's music as the theme of Almaviva's graceful cavatina in *The Barber of Seville*.

In addition to *Ciro in Babilonia*, Rossini produced during this prolific year of 1812 three operas, of which one, *La Pietra del Paragone*, was received at the Scala of Milan with something like enthusiasm.

Of the music of *La Pietra del Paragone* no one knows anything by direct evidence in the present day, for the simple reason that it was never printed. The Italian music-publishers paid nothing in those days for the copyright of a work, and it was only in the case of some exceptionally brilliant success that they thought it worth while to have the score engraved. Most evils bring with them some compensation, and the youthful Rossini, with many unpublished operas on hand, felt himself at liberty to borrow pieces from them with a view to their reproduction in other works.

*La Pietra del Paragone* was Rossini's eleventh work, and he produced two or three other operas before he made, in 1813, a European success with *Tancredi*.

One of his most interesting failures or only partial successes, produced at Bologna in 1809, and reproduced at Rome in 1812, was *Demetrio e Polibio*, written by Signora Mombelli on suggestions furnished by her husband, Signor Mombelli, with the two daughters, Marianna and Esther Mombelli, in the two principal parts, with Mombelli, the father, in a third; while a fourth was undertaken by a Signor Olivieri, an old friend of Signora Mombelli, who, besides filling utility characters on the stage, acted as cook and major-domo in the household.

"Without being pretty," wrote Rossini's earliest biographer, on the strength of a communication made to him by an Italian officer who knew them well, "the Mombellis have pleasing faces; but they are ferociously virtuous, and it is supposed that the father, who is an ambitious man, wishes to get them married."

Another of Rossini's early works, which, like *Demetrio*, is remembered only by the droll things connected with its production, is the operetta or *farsa* called *Il Figlio per Azzardo*, written for the manager of the San Mose Theatre at Venice after he had taken offence at Rossini's promise to compose an opera for the rival establishment, the Fenice. To punish Rossini, who was bound to him by contract, the enraged impresario forwarded to the composer a libretto so ridiculous



even among other libretti, that it was impossible to clothe it with any music at all worthy of the name. Yet Rossini was compelled by his contract to furnish crotchets and quavers of some kind, and got out of his difficulty in an ingenious and novel manner. The resourceful maestro wrote tender sentimentalities for the buffo, assigned bass songs to the tenor, and utilized only the lower notes of a soprano who prided herself on her upper ones. An artist who had lost his voice had to sing an air of extraordinary compass bristling with difficulties. To suit the ludicrous din of the stage performance, suitable orchestration had been supplied, and in one movement the instrumentalists had to accentuate the first note of each bar by striking the tin shades of the candles illuminating their desks. The joke was a good one, but the audience did not see the fun of it, and to avoid personal injuries Rossini had to make a hurried escape by a special exit.

Rossini had written nine operas (all completely forgotten) when in 1813 he produced at Venice *Tancredi*, the work which was at once to make him celebrated throughout Europe. It is interesting to know that Napoleon heard the first performance of *Tancredi* at Venice, as he had previously heard that of "Fidelio" at Vienna. It is needless to speculate as to which of the two masterpieces in such different styles gave him the greatest pleasure. Whatever may be thought of the absolute merits of a work which delighted Meyerbeer but displeased Weber, there can be no doubt as to the fact that no opera had ever before obtained such

triumphant success. Stendhal's stories of the transports of enthusiasm excited by the air "Di tanti palpiti" and by the duet "Mi rivedrai te rivèdro" have been repeated by all Rossini's subsequent biographers.

These and other melodies were heard all over Venice. Boys and girls sang them in the streets, the gondoliers used them as serenades, and they were hummed in the law-courts by the officials, by the judge on the bench, and on one occasion it is said by a prisoner at the bar.

Rossini had made so many innovations, and had written with such freedom, that he feared, in his own words, "that the Venetians would think him mad, though," he added, "they really showed themselves much madder than I was." It was with fear and trembling that Rossini went to the theatre on the evening of the first performance, for notice had been given him that "the people from the other house" would pay him out for the ridicule to which he had exposed them in connection with his farcical and burlesque operatic extravaganza, "*Il Figlio per Azzardo*." To avoid possible salutes of turnips and baked apples, he did not show himself in the orchestra, and entrusted the direction of the work to the first violin. But the overture, the most brilliant piece of orchestral music that had ever been heard in Italy as an introduction to an opera, took the audience by storm, and the composer seized an early opportunity of replacing the leader of the violins at the conductor's desk. There were critics in the house who censured and deplored



the audacity with which the young composer had departed from the much simpler style of his predecessors Paisiello and Cimarosa, and of his contemporaries—in full activity—Paer and Mosca.

Up to Rossini's time, which may be said to have begun with *Tancredi*, opera in Italy was divided by a sharp line into the serious and the comic, each style having its own particular rules and its own set of singers. Rossini's wild production, *Il Figlio per Azzardo*, may perhaps have suggested to him that a comic singer might at times be entrusted with a serious part, a serious singer with a comic one. Our own Lord Mount Edgcumbe complained bitterly, when *Tancredi* was performed in London, that "the grand distinction between serious and comic operas was nearly at an end, the separation of the singers for their performance entirely so."

Lord Mount Edgcumbe regretted, moreover, the interminable recitatives of præ-Rossinian operas, as the sufficiently long recitatives of Rossini's works may afterwards have been regretted by admirers of Verdi.

"The dialogue," writes Lord Mount Edgcumbe in his "Reminiscences of the Opera," "which used to be carried on in recitative, is now cut up into *pezzi concertati*, or long singing conversations, which present a tedious succession of unconnected, ever-changing *motivi* having nothing to do with each other; and if a satisfactory air is for a moment introduced which the ear would like to dwell upon, to hear modulated, varied, and again returned to, it is broken off before it is well under-

stood by a sudden transition into a totally different melody, time, and key, and occurs no more, so that no impression can be made or recollection preserved. Single songs are almost exploded in serious opera. Even the prima-donna, who would formerly have complained at having less than three or four airs allotted to her, is now satisfied with one trifling cavatina for a whole opera."

In *opera seria* until the production of *Tancredi*, the leading parts were assigned to the male sopranist or *primo uomo*, a prima-donna with a contralto voice, and a tenor. Discarding the male sopranist, whom he could not endure, Rossini assigned the leading part in *Tancredi* to a celebrated contralto, Madame Malanotte, who impersonated the chivalrous young hero, and received every evening rapturous applause for her perfect singing of "Di tanti palpiti." The character of Amenaide was undertaken by a soprano. This part was at one time sung by Sontag with Malibran as Tancredi.

It must also be mentioned that in *Tancredi* a bass singer was for the first time entrusted with a leading part. The Italian audiences could see nothing to object to in any of these changes. They were, on the contrary, delighted with them, without, perhaps, noticing at the time in what Rossini's innovations consisted. There was much novelty, moreover, in Rossini's treatment of the orchestra, which in his hands was no longer the orchestra of stringed instruments written for by Pergolese, Paisiello, and for the most part also by Cimarosa.

One ought not, perhaps, to take leave of *Tancredi* without referring to the curious anecdotes connected with the air "Di tanti palpiti," by Carpani, Stendhal, and other biographers of Rossini—as, for instance, that the melody was conceived and put on paper in five minutes, while some rice was being fried for the composer's dinner; also that the melody was borrowed note for note from the music, according to some gossips, of the Roman Catholic, according to others of the Greek, Church. It was an original conception, and has no connection with any Church or with any rice.

"THE BARBER OF SEVILLE."

A composer's first flight of operas is usually, according to Mendelssohn, of as little value as a first litter of pups, and we have seen that Rossini left all his earlier works to perish (with the exception of a brand here and a brand there, saved from the general burning) until he brought out *Tancredi*, his first serious opera.

*Aureliano in Palmira*, produced just after *Tancredi*, was serious chiefly in the sense of being dull. It seems to have been, as regards music, a reproduction of *Ciro in Babilonia*, and the public cared as little for the activity of *Aureliano* in one country as for that of *Cyrus* in another. *Aureliano*, however, is worth remembering for two reasons: first, because the melody of Almaviva's graceful cavatina passed through it on its way from *Ciro in Babilonia* to its final resting-place in *The*

*Barber*, and, secondly, because it was in the one performance given of this opera that Velluti, the last of the sopranists, made his only appearance in any work of Rossini's.

The composer could not tolerate the elaborate embroidery beneath which the enterprising vocalist concealed his melodies, nor was he able to endure the man's artificial voice. The sopranist on his side, accustomed to a profusion of flattery, could not stand the interference of Rossini with his gratuitous additions to what the composer had written. Rossini's airs are for the most part too ornate in themselves. What, then, must they have been when a florid executant undertook still further to decorate them? The result of the misunderstanding, or rather disagreement, between vocalist and composer was that *Aureliano* was played but one night. Rossini had nothing more to do with sopranists, which, however, did but little injury to Velluti, who went on singing for some years afterwards, until in 1824 he made his last appearance in Meyerbeer's final contribution to the Italian stage, "*Il Crociato*."

We are now approaching the date of one of the most important events in Rossini's career—the production of *The Barber of Seville*, a brilliant and charming work which its composer produced with great rapidity, though not as has been set forth by Stendhal and most of Rossini's biographers, in thirteen days.

"Did you ever hear," said someone to Donizetti, "that it took Rossini just thirteen days to compose *The Barber*?"



"I quite believe it," replied Donizetti, "he is so terribly lazy."

As a matter of fact, Rossini worked assiduously at *The Barber*, and, as far as writing down the music is concerned, finished it at one almost continuous sitting, which lasted several weeks. Biographers tell us that the subject of the libretto was not fixed upon until some days after December 26, 1815, when Rossini signed his agreement with the manager; but there is no evidence of this, and there is good reason for believing that Rossini decided on making a new setting of Beaumarchais' "Barber of Seville" after hearing Mozart's incomparable setting of the same dramatist's "Marriage of Figaro" at Milan a few months previously.

In 1814 the habitués of La Scala had listened with great interest to Mozart's "Don Giovanni," and greater interest still was excited in 1815 by the master's earlier opera. We know from the internal evidence furnished by Rossini's own works that he studied the scores of Mozart, as of Haydn, and we may be sure that he would not have missed the opportunity of listening to two master-pieces, the music of which, until 1814 and 1815, he had never heard with the ear.

Mozart's brilliant setting of "The Marriage of Figaro," its airs and duets so full of melody, its ingenious concerted pieces, its magnificent finales, the whole supported by a varied instrumentation as yet foreign to the Italian stage, could not but suggest to Rossini the happy idea of treating Beaumarchais' twin work, not, indeed, in the style

of Mozart, but at least in a more modern style than that of Paisiello, whose antiquated manner is reproduced without being absolutely caricatured in the air sung by Dr. Bartolo in the Music-lesson scene of the Rossinian *Barber*.

Beaumarchais' "Barber of Seville" was a lyrical comedy originally intended by its author, who was himself a musician, for the operatic stage. "The Marriage of Figaro," on the other hand, is a satirical comedy with nothing in it suggestive of music, except the highly lyrical personage of Cherubino, who in the original work is furnished with a song which gives a musical character to the whole part.

Dates have an eloquence of their own, and if it was in 1815 that Rossini heard for the first time "The Marriage of Figaro," it was also in that year that he proposed to make a new setting of "The Barber of Seville."

In Rossini's preface to the new libretto written for him under his own particular directions by Sterbini, it is set forth that Beaumarchais' comedy had been rearranged by Rossini, in order to avoid the reproach of entering into rivalry with the immortal composer who has preceded him, and also because a new versification and new situations were required to suit the modern theatrical taste, entirely changed since the time when the renowned Paisiello wrote his work.

It may be mentioned that Paisiello, invited to St. Petersburg by the Empress Catherine, brought out his "Barber of Seville" at the Hermitage Theatre in the year 1790, the very year in which



Mozart's "Don Giovanni," after thirty-six rehearsals at the Pergola of Florence, was pronounced "inexecutable," but, being nevertheless brought out, fell flat, and was dismissed as "hyperborean" and "without melody."

Rossini delighted in choruses, but Paisiello in his simple, antiquated treatment of the "Barber" introduced no chorus, as he also dispensed with concerted finales, while contenting himself as regards instrumentation with an orchestra of strings. But it was absolutely necessary, according to Rossini's preface, to have choruses together with other innovations, "both for conformity with modern usage" and also "because they are indispensable for musical effect in so vast a theatre."

Sterbini's libretto was described in a subtitle as "newly versified throughout and arranged for the use of the modern Italian musical theatre."

Italian composers are not in the habit of theorizing about their art, and it was only in connection with *The Barber of Seville* that Rossini ever put forth any statement of principles.

Who can say how long he may not have been occupied with ideas for setting to music this or that scene in the comedy he had decided to turn into an opera? When on December 26, 1815, after signing the agreement with his impresario, Rossini went practically to work, he took up his abode in the same house with Sterbini, his librettist, and Zamboni, to whom the part of Figaro had already been assigned. Sterbini was a ready versifier, and, making no claim to the

character of an inspired bard, altered his words without protest when it was found necessary that he should do so for the sake of the music.

It is on record that, working with Sterbini in the same room, Rossini not only set his words very rapidly, but frequently supplied him with music for which words had to be written. There is twice or three times as much music in Rossini's *Barber* as in the "Barber" of Paisiello, and Rossini must indeed have worked rapidly, for he was to deliver, and did deliver, the whole of the first act, including the elaborate concerted finale, which occupies about twenty minutes in execution, by January 20.

The first act (now divided into two) takes us much more than halfway through the opera, and a much shorter second act, which completed the work, was handed to the manager piece by piece in time for production on February 6. The first act was, of course, put into rehearsal as soon as received, and most of the rehearsals, of which twelve were considered sufficient, must have been conducted without the presence of the composer, who after finishing the first act was obliged to go on working at the second.

In considering the marvellously short time occupied by Rossini in composing his masterpiece in the comedy style, it must be remembered that some of his melodic material was not absolutely new, and that here and there he took entire pieces from earlier works of his own. Thus, the overture was the one which had already served as preface to the single representation of *Aureliano in Palmira*,

while the theme of Almaviva's cavatina—"Ecco ridente il cielo"—came from the same work, to which it had been transferred from the unsuccessful oratorio *Ciro in Babilonia*.

The Spanish air sung to guitar accompaniment by Garcia in the character of Almaviva was not Rossini's at all. As for Figaro's song, "Largo al factotum," it is a free, but at the same time unmistakable, imitation of a piece in Mozart's "Zauberflöte."

In the second act the air for Rosina in the Music-lesson scene is any air that Rosina likes to sing; and from Bartolo's comments, and from his presentation of a song in the good old style that had passed away, it would seem that Rosina from the first sang some brilliant air of the day, though the story has somehow got into circulation that the Music-lesson was originally made the subject of a trio which, through the neglect of the copyist, got lost.

The lively air sung by Berta, Rosina's incapable or treacherous duenna, is the reproduction of a Russian air (originally, one would think, a Russian dance) which Rossini is said to have introduced out of compliment to a Russian lady who was in the habit of singing it. The trio "Zitti-Zitti" is, as regards the first eight bars, taken note by note from Simon's air in Haydn's "Seasons," while Rosina's final air is simply "Zitti-Zitti" with a changed rhythm.

But after allowing for these additions, insertions, and imitations, a mass of admirable music remains, which Rossini, aided by the willing and able

librettist, who never left him, managed to compose in the course of a very few weeks—say, altogether one month.

The story of the first representation of *The Barber* is sufficiently well known. The opera was far indeed from going so smoothly the first night as did *Tancredi*. In the case of the earlier work a cabal had been expected, but without reason. In the case of *The Barber*, without being expected, it soon showed itself.

Although Rossini had behaved most respectfully to the aged composer who had already set the "Barber of Seville" to music, yet neither Paisiello himself nor his numerous followers could tolerate Rossini's presumption in venturing to treat a subject which had received from his predecessor what was regarded as its definite musical form. In the hope of appeasing the animosity of Paisiello's unreasoning partisans, Rossini called his work *Almaviva*, though it was thought unnecessary to retain this title after the hostile manifestations of the first night.

The poet Sterbini, moreover, was, for reasons unknown, a most unpopular personage in Rome.

Manifestations against the new opera are said to have been begun, not only before one note of the work had been heard, but before even the beginning of the overture, which, when it was at last played, excited continuous murmurs of disapprobation. The overture, according to M. Azevedo, was an original one which somehow got lost through the carelessness of that eternal copyist. Stendhal (otherwise Carpani), who was



pretty sure to have been present at the first representation, says the overture was the one composed for *Aureliano in Palmira*, which, by general consent of the authorities, is allowed to have been the overture ultimately adopted.

The opening chorus of men (the chorus of the Argentina Theatre consisted of men alone) was not liked, or at least was not applauded, and the appearance of Garcia, one of the most admired tenors of his time, was soon followed by fits of laughter.

There was nothing wrong with Garcia's voice, but he was about to sing his own Spanish air to the accompaniment of a guitar when one of the strings snapped. This was enough to furnish the ill-disposed audience with a pretext for derision, which was renewed when Zamboni, the Figaro of the evening, entered with another guitar.

Not a note of Figaro's opening air was heard, and the general displeasure was increased when Signora Giorgi-Righetti, as Rosina, appeared in the balcony, and, instead of singing the expected cavatina, uttered only a few words.

The succeeding duet for Figaro and the Count was hissed throughout, and silence was only restored when Rosina appeared on the stage to sing "Una voce." Here, thanks to the prima-donna, who was young, charming, and the possessor of a beautiful voice, the music was listened to, and the air received a treble salvo of applause. Rossini turned round from the conductor's desk and bowed to the public. He then whispered to the singer "Oh, natura!" and at the same time

conceived the hope that the opera might yet be saved.

The entry of the music-master, Don Basilio, was most unfortunate, for a small trap had been left open on the stage, over which he stumbled and fell. The bruised vocalist went through "*La calunnia*"—than which there is no finer example in opera of perfect correspondence between words and music—with a handkerchief up to his nose. The audience thought that this, together with the fall which had preceded it, was part of the stage business, and, finding it too pantomimic, hissed.

The admirable letter duet shared the fate of most of the preceding pieces. One or two things had again gone wrong, and to every little slip the minutest attention was paid. The audience had resolved that the work should fail, and welcomed every incident that seemed to tend towards that result. At the beginning of the concerted finale, the finest and most dramatic piece of the kind that Rossini had yet composed, a harmful and most unnecessary cat showed itself, with the usual result from such an appearance on the stage. When Rosina tried to drive the animal away, it ran towards Figaro, who chased it in the direction of Dr. Bartholo, whom it avoided only to find itself between the legs of Don Basilio.

The public now looked upon the opera, finale and all, as a huge joke, and the finest piece of music which had yet come from Rossini's pen was treated as mere hubbub. The audience went on hissing and hooting until the end of the



act. Then Rossini turned round, shrugged his shoulders, and applauded on his own account.

When the curtain rose for the second and last act, the public took vengeance on the composer for his contemptuous attitude. It would listen to nothing more. Knowing the value of his work, Rossini remained perfectly calm, and on the fall of the curtain walked quietly home. The principal singers, as soon as they had changed their clothes, went to pay him a visit of sympathy and consolation. But he was in bed asleep.

The next morning Garcia had an interview with Rossini about his unappreciated air, for which Rossini substituted the graceful theme from the chorus in *Aureliano*. The discarded Spanish air *Ecco Ridente* was afterwards restored by Rubini.

Rossini did not care to face the public at the second representation of his opera. Meanwhile, many of the best connoisseurs in Rome had called to assure him of the pain they felt at his work having been so unjustly treated, and of their full confidence in its ultimate success.

The audience now listened to the music which the night before they had scarcely heard, and many of the best pieces were warmly applauded. Recollections of the ancient "Barber" may have prevented many of its admirers from appreciating its much more animated successor. Rossini's work did not in any case make the sudden, striking success which the less modern *Tancredi* had achieved.

For Rossini—whose operas, with the exception of his comic masterpiece, *The Barber of Seville*,

and his masterpiece in the serious style, *William Tell*, seem in the present day antiquated—was in his own day nothing if not an innovator. With Rossini, indeed, Italian Opera in the sense of musical drama came into existence. Rossini owed so little to his Italian predecessors, and so much to Mozart, that in writing the history of the Opera in Italy one might begin with Rossini, and, after showing to what extent he was indebted to Mozart, pass on to Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, though it would be impossible to write the history of Mozart without accounting, through his experiences in Italy, for the Italian character of his melodies and of his general treatment of the voice.

Mozart, like Gluck before him, and like Meyerbeer after him, composed his first operas, not only to Italian libretti for Italian singers, but also for Italian audiences, without troubling himself to alter the composition of Italian orchestras, which lacked many of the instruments in wood and brass written for in their own country by German composers, with Hasse, Gluck and Mozart among them.

So backward in Rossini's early days was all the orchestral music of Italy that the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart were still unknown. By the word "sinfonia" was understood the overture to an opera, and when in the first days of the nineteenth century a symphony by Haydn was announced for performance, it was thought necessary in order to distinguish it from the usual operatic overture to describe it as "Una sinfonia classica in quattro pezzi."

While adopting little by little the orchestral system of Mozart, and in some particulars going beyond it, Rossini confined himself exclusively to the composition of operas, his other works (some of them purely instrumental) being, with the exception of the *Stabat Mater*, unimportant.

Opera is held by some to be the lowest form of art, and one of the most learned of living British musicians has declared that “operatic audiences have always had the lowest standard of taste of any section of human beings calling themselves musical.” Be that as it may, the fact remains that Gluck, Mozart and Wagner are chiefly known, and to all appearances will (like Rossini) be hereafter exclusively known, by their operatic works. It is, further, beyond dispute that it was in opera that every singer of distinction made his or her reputation.

Rossini had not the opportunity of hearing the later works of Wagner, nor any works whatever of Richard Strauss, and, when asked his opinion of the music of the future, he replied that, as he lived in the present, such music was not addressed to him.

His temperament and the traditions of his native land led him in the first place to cultivate melody, but he depended more on harmony, and much more on instrumentation than any of his Italian predecessors had done; and there are few overtures that have been more universally admired than those of *The Barber of Seville*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *Semiramide*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *William Tell*.

## MOSE IN EGITTO—ARMIDA—SEMIRAMIDE.

When Rossini, at the age of twenty-four, had produced *The Barber of Seville*, he might have retired on his laurels; he was the most successful composer in Europe. Weber's "Der Freischütz" had not yet been written, and "Fidelio," Beethoven's first opera, had also proved his last. But Rossini's means would not have permitted him to remain idle, and—more cogent reason—he was still actuated by a creative spirit—a genius for production.

Before bringing out *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini had signed a contract with the illustrious Barbaja, first impresario of his time. Barbaja had been waiter at an operatic café, and had kept the gambling-saloon attached to one of the principal opera houses. What better qualification for the post of operatic manager? He had lived in an operatic atmosphere, and knew from direct observation the drawing power of every composer and every singer of the day.

After hearing *Tancredi*, and witnessing its effect upon an impressionable and appreciative audience, he had come to the conclusion that Rossini was the composer to put his money upon. He could afford to pay very much better terms than Rossini had received for *Tancredi*, or even for *The Barber*, which is said to have brought him in the immense sum of £80; less than the hundred and twentieth part of what Verdi received from Ricordi for "Otello." Barbaja found that he could go as high in the way of salary as



£40 a month, to which, curiously enough, he added a share in the profits of the San Carlo roulette-tables.

This was equivalent to the modern "percentage on the gross receipts." The fuller the theatre, the fuller between the acts and after the performance would be the gambling-saloon.

For his £500 a year or more, Rossini was to compose two operas annually and to supervise the production of whatever works the manager might wish to bring out, whether at the San Carlo Theatre or at the Teatro del Fondo.

Barbaja behaved generously towards the members of his company, and he hastened to engage talent wherever he found it. On one occasion he met a famous baritone to whom, after hearing him sing, he at once offered a very liberal contract.

"But I have been a member of your company, and have drawn my salary for the last six months," protested the vocalist.

"You don't say so!" cried Barbaja: "go to the musical conductor at once, and tell him to give you a part."

One night, when some ill-bred practical jokers ventured to hiss Rubini, merely to irritate Barbaja, "Never mind those brutes, Rubini: you draw your salary from me," cried the indignant manager, "and you are singing divinely."

The first opera that Rossini composed for Barbaja was *Elisabetta*, of which all that remains is the overture played for a single night in front of *Aureliano in Palmira*, and since February 16,

1816, regarded as the indispensable prelude to *The Barber of Seville*. The music of *Elisabetta* had not been published, and it was performed only at Naples, whereas *The Barber of Seville* was brought out at Rome.

In *Elisabetta*, Manuel Garcia, son of the Garcia who created the part of Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*—the same Manuel Garcia who, until quite lately, was Professor of Singing at our Royal Academy of Music, and on March 17, 1904, entered his hundredth year—undertook a child's part. He was then (1815) eleven years of age, and he joined some years later his sisters, Marietta and Pauline—better known as Madame Malibran and Madame Viardot Garcia—under the direction of his eminent father, who, besides being manager, was *primo tenore* of the company.

Rossini complained, in connection with Barbaja's operatic establishment, that it lacked baritones and basses. These voices had hitherto counted for nothing in *opera seria*, where they were kept quite in the background, reserved for the lower parts in the quartett. Such singers as Tamburini and Lablache, Graziani and Edouard de Reszke, are indebted to Rossini for the prominent parts assigned to them in modern opera.

Barbaja had two theatres at Naples, and the San Carlo having been burnt down, he concentrated his united forces at the Teatro del Fondo. Rossini had arranged to bring out an operatic version of "Otello," and, in accordance with his request, Barbaja engaged a baritone (though the



difference between baritone and bass was scarcely recognised in those days) for the part of Iago. Benedetti was the name of the vocalist.

There were two first tenors in the company, Davide and Nozzari, and Barbaja prevailed upon them, contrary to the custom of first tenors, to appear together in the same opera. They were probably less influenced by the manager's urgent representations than by the fact that they were to sing in a work written by the first composer of the day, whose *Tancredi* and *Barber of Seville* had been received with an enthusiasm never before known in Italy.

It was arranged that Davide should appear as Otello, Nozzari consenting to undertake the inferior yet comparatively prominent part of Roderigo.

"Davide," wrote a French critic, who heard *Otello* when it had been before the public for nearly seven years, "excites among the dilettanti an enthusiasm and delight which could scarcely be conceived without having been witnessed. He is a singer of the new school, full of mannerism, affectation and display. But he is also a singer full of warmth, verve, expression, energy, and musical sentiment. Alone he can fill up and give life to a scene. It is impossible for another singer to carry away an audience as he does, and when he will only be simple he is admirable—he is the Rossini of song. Doubtless the manner in which Garcia sings and plays the part of Otello is preferable to that of Davide. It is purer, more severe, more constantly dramatic; but, with

all his faults, Davide produces more effect—a great deal more effect.”

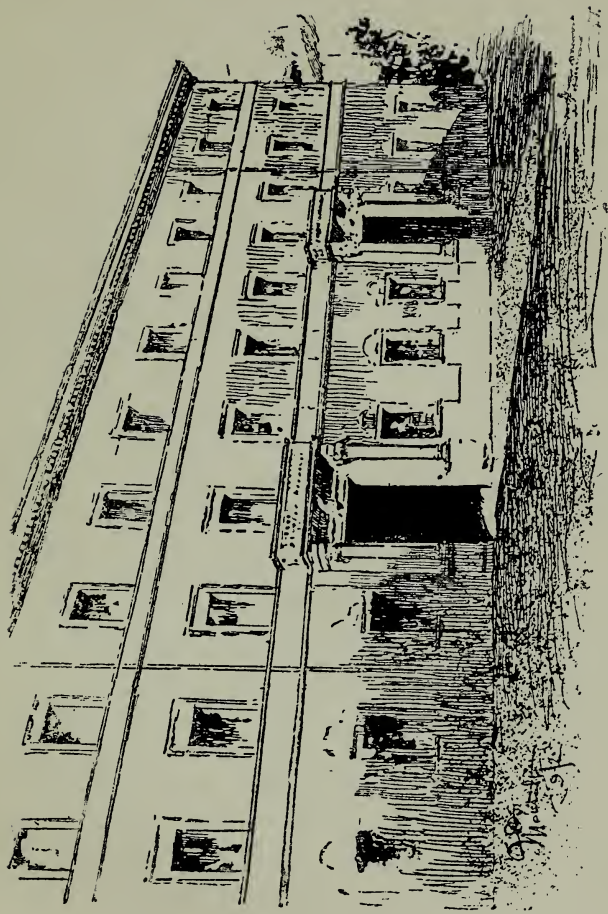
Rossini's singers continued to take great liberties with his music, already sufficiently florid as the composer wrote it. At the time Davide was indulging in the wildest embroideries of the airs allotted to him in *Otello*, Rossini was already beginning to simplify a style which in *William Tell* was to become almost severe.

Besides assigning one of his three leading parts to the bass, Rossini gave in *Otello* increased importance to his choral pieces, the successive entry of two choruses in the concerted finale of the first act being particularly effective. In *Otello*, moreover, the recitatives were no longer of the rightly-named “secco” description. Besides being shortened, they were accompanied now by a quartett of strings, now by the full orchestra. Each dramatic scene, moreover, was one continuous piece of music.

The last act of Rossini's *Otello* is one of the most beautiful, and, at the same time, one of the most dramatic, that its composer has left us. Desdemona's Willow song is graceful and pathetic; the song for the gondolier is charming, and suggestively sad. Criticising Rossini's idea of making the gondolier sing the impressive lines from Dante which reflect so perfectly Desdemona's sorrowful mood, the librettist remarked that the ordinary Venetian gondolier did not know Dante.

“Mine does!” replied Rossini, who of course did not abandon his happy idea.

It would be interesting to hear on the same



MUSICAL COLLEGE AT PESARO, BUILT WITH FUNDS  
LEFT BY ROSSINI.



evening the last act of Rossini's and of Verdi's *Otello*. Neither would suffer by the comparison.

As regards the instrumentation, new prominence was given to clarionets, horns, and trombones. Rossini had always been fond of the horn, his own instrument in his younger days, and especially that of his father. Every lover of music knows how effectively he afterwards wrote for the four horns in the overture to *Semiramide*. The use of the trombones he had learnt, if from no other source, from the scene of the Commander's Statue in "Don Giovanni," which he had heard at Milan in 1815.

According to the Italian composers of an earlier school, before the reformation period of Rossini, clarionets ought only to be used for calling cows; horns were open-air instruments, suitable solely for hunting-parties; while trumpets and drums were out of place except in military bands.

Rossini had a positive passion for introducing new instruments into the orchestra, and when in 1817 he produced *La Gazza Ladra*, he began the overture with a sort of duet for side-drums, one at each end of the orchestra. It is true that in *La Gazza Ladra* the heroine's brother is about to be taken for a soldier, and that troops come upon the stage for the purpose of carrying him off.

Startled by the introductory drums, and delighted by the spirited and fascinating waltz tunes of which the overture is mainly composed, the audience did not care to study in detail a work so effective as a whole. But some juvenile purist was so enraged



at the use of side-drums where side-drums had never been used before, that he swore to have the composer's blood, and went about armed with a stiletto in the hope of meeting him. Hearing of these projects of vengeance, Rossini resolved to anticipate them, and, finding out who the young maniac was, begged a mutual friend to present him. On being brought into the presence of his intended victim, the juvenile assassin listened with interest to Rossini's explanations, and, charmed by so much condescension, cast his murderous weapon to the winds.

For *La Gazza Ladra* Rossini invented the first of what, since the production of that opera, have been specially known as "contralto parts"—boys' parts, that is to say—parts for pages, or for devoted youths, who give their affection while expecting nothing in return; Pippo in *La Gazza Ladra*, Malcolm Graeme in *La Donna del Lago*, Arsace in *Semiramide*, Maffeo Orsini in Donizetti's "Lucrezia Borgia," Pierotto in "Linda di Chamouni," Meyerbeer's Urbain in "Les Huguenots," etc.

All these secondary contralto parts may well have been suggested by Mozart's "Cherubino," which, though written for the soprano voice, is frequently assigned to the contralto.

There was novelty in the prayer for three voices, "O nume benefico," though absolute inappropriateness in the music, which is tuneful, but not in the slightest degree devotional. The most novel feature of the work was, certainly, the introduction of side-drums in the overture, of which,



some dozen or twenty years afterwards, we find an agreeable reminiscence in the opening movement of Auber's delightful overture to "Fra Diavolo."

No composer was more abundantly imitated than Rossini, and imitated, moreover, with success—the type of his melodies, his far too florid ornamentation, his crescendo effects, his boys' parts for the contralto voice, his choral prayers, and the form of his overtures, so closely reproduced by Boiëldieu, Herold, Auber, and our own Balfe.

Because Rossini placed a brilliant solo for the prima-donna at the end of *Cenerentola*, Bellini concluded "La Sonnambula" in the same manner. This, indeed, seems for a considerable time to have been looked upon as the natural end of all operas. Donizetti adopted it times out of number.

The first choral prayer ever heard on the stage occurs in Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, where it is introduced with admirable dramatic effect. Rossini rearranged *Mosè* with much additional music for the Paris Opera House, where the prayer was heard by Auber, to whom it suggested the very beautiful prayer in "Masaniello," transferred by the composer to the stage from one of his own Masses. Meyerbeer, impressed in his turn by the stage prayer as a means of dramatic effect, did not fail to adopt it; and in his last work, "L'Africaine," we meet with no less than three different specimens of the operatic *preghiera*. Verdi followed suit in "Nabuco" and "I Lombardi." Wagner's Pilgrims' chorus in "Tannhäuser" is another effective example of the choral prayer.

After all, may not Rossini himself have borrowed the idea from the sublime chorus of prisoners in "Fidelio"? We know from Ferdinand Hiller's "Conversations with Rossini" what profound admiration he entertained for Beethoven's music ; and Monsieur Chouquet, in his excellent article on Rossini in Grove's "Musical Dictionary," assures us that it was Rossini who induced Habeneck, conductor at the Paris Opera House and at the Société des Concerts, to produce at these concerts Beethoven's symphonies.

Rossini had in Italy so many hard-and-fast conventions to fight against that the innovations he felt it necessary to insist upon were really innumerable. He was the first Italian composer to assign principal female parts to the soprano voice. In no other musical, or semi-musical, or anti-musical country could such assignment have been made a subject of adverse criticism. In Naples, however, when at the first representation of *Matilda di Shabran* it was found that for the prima-donna's part a high soprano had been engaged, the connoisseurs and dilettanti of the day discussed the matter with so much warmth that they at last adjourned from the theatre to the street, and there fought out the question with their walking-sticks.

In this same year of 1817 Rossini brought out his *Cenerentola*, an operatic version of the Cinderella story as arranged for the stage by the popular French dramatist, Etienne. The art of writing plays is almost as much a French art as that of composing operas is an Italian one. All Rossini's

Bellini's, Donizetti's, and Verdi's most successful operas have been based on libretti derived from French comedies, tragedies, ballets, or melodramas. Rossini wrote *Cenerentola* for Rome, where it was brought out at the Teatro Valle with remarkable success. The character of the heroine was undertaken by Madame Giorgi-Righetti, who a year before had sung so brilliantly at the Argentina Theatre of the same capital the part of Rosina in *Il Barbiere*. She created veritable enthusiasm by her brilliant execution of the final rondo, "Non più mesta," which soon made the tour of Europe, as four years previously "Di tanti palpiti" had done. The tuneful air, with its sparkling variations, took the fancy of operatic composers equally with that of the operatic public; but whereas for the next quarter of a century and longer all Rossini's followers were to imitate "Non più mesta," Rossini himself had already had more than enough of that form of finale. *La Cenerentola* was the fourth opera which he had terminated with a show-piece for the prima-donna. After *La Cenerentola* he abandoned this simple but effective device to all who might care to adopt it.

In England *La Cenerentola* dropped out of fashion years ago. Among the last of Rossini's operas to hold their ground—apart from the still living *Barber of Seville* and *William Tell*—were *La Gazza Ladra* and *Semiramide*. Ninetta was one of Madame Patti's favourite parts. *Semiramide* disappeared from the repertory of the Royal Italian Opera with Grisi, and from that of Her Majesty's Theatre with Titiens.

Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* seemed to be identified with Adelina Patti; but the part has survived her retirement from the operatic stage, and nearly every year some fresh candidate for the honour of filling it comes forward.

In London *William Tell* cannot be played without some such singer as Tamberlik, Wachtel, Mongini, or Tamagno in the part of Arnold. In Paris suitable tenors seem constantly within reach, and at the Paris Opera House *Guillaume Tell* was quite recently in the bills.

A third work produced by Rossini in the year 1817 was *Armida*, composed on the same favourite operatic theme which Gluck had treated with so much success. The principal characters were assigned to Nozzari, the tenor, and Benedetti, the baritone, for whom the parts of Otello and Iago had been written the year before. The name-part was undertaken by Mademoiselle Colbran, a handsome mezzo-soprano vocalist with dark hair and flashing eyes, whom a few years later Rossini was to make his wife. She was a prima-donna of the first rank, and had amassed enough money to yield her, according to Stendhal, £800 a year, though a later and more accurate biographer, Azevedo, reduces the annual amount to £400. *Armida* contains among its most remarkable pieces the famous duet "Amor possente Nume!" which Davide, the tenor, liked so much that he introduced it (Rossini being absent) into the last act of *Otello*,—taking Desdemona gracefully by the hand and leading her towards the footlights instead of brutally putting her to death.



*Armida* was remarkable also for a very beautiful chorus which, female voices being abundant at the San Carlo Theatre, the composer was able to write, as the scene demanded, for female voices alone. This was some compensation to him for having been obliged at Rome to write for male voices only—men alone being included in the chorus of the Argentina Theatre.

It may be mentioned, moreover, in connection with *Armida*, that this is the only one of Rossini's Italian operas for which he composed ballet music. The scene of the enchanted garden demanded it. Ten years later, in 1827, Rossini transferred the ballet music of *Armida* to the French version of *Mosè in Egitto* as remodelled for the stage of the Paris Opera House. Unlike *Armida*, the story of Moses in and out of Egypt did not, by dramatic necessity, require any dancing; but the laws and stipulations of the Académie Royale de Musique exacted the introduction of a ballet in every grand opera produced, and no exception could be made in favour of *Mosè*.

In *Armida* Rossini adopted for the first time the division into three acts which Donizetti, Bellini, and most other composers, were afterwards to adopt. When Rossini began to write for the stage, an opera was invariably divided into two acts, and between the acts a ballet was given; a proof that in those days the Italians scarcely looked upon opera as a dramatic entertainment, regarding it rather as a concert on the stage.

Rossini's next important production in Italy was



that same *Mosè in Egitto* of which we have been speaking. Mademoiselle Colbran as prima-donna, Nozzari as tenor, and Benedetti as baritone or bass, again appear. Here the composer gave greater importance to the bass voice than he had ever done before. Porto, a celebrated basso, had been engaged at Rossini's request, and his sonorous tones rendered Pharaoh as prominent a personage as Moses himself. Benedetti in the part of Mosè was made up after Michael Angelo's celebrated statue, and his singing, his acting, and his general demeanour, are said to have been admirable, artistic, and thoroughly effective.

Among those of Rossini's important serious works which form stepping-stones in his advance from *Tancredi* to *William Tell*, *Otello* was the second, *Mosè* the third, and *La Donna del Lago* the fourth. The cast of the opera founded on Scott's "Lady of the Lake" includes parts for a mezzo-soprano (Mademoiselle Colbran); a page-contralto (Pisaroni), in the part of Malcolm Graeme, two first tenors (Davide and Nozzari); and a baritone or bass (Benedetti). The chorus has much to do, and for the first time a military band is introduced on the stage, to be heard first by itself, afterwards with the chorus.

This last innovation, which may have been suggested by the ballroom orchestra in "Don Giovanni" (though that is not precisely the same thing as a military band), does not seem to have been particularly admired. It is always a little dangerous to introduce in stage work new effects of any kind; and the most striking musical com-

bination which Rossini had yet conceived imperilled the success of the work in which he introduced it. It may at least be said that when the military band on the stage, the chorus of Highland bards with harp accompaniments, and the ordinary operatic orchestra were all heard together, the public showed no signs of joy.

Vexed by the comparative failure of his grand concerted finale, on the effect of which he had confidently counted, Rossini left Naples the same night and made for Milan, amusing himself on the road by spreading the report that his new opera had delighted the Neapolitans. Oddly enough, what the composer believed to be false turned out, before he reached Milan, to be perfectly true.

The trumpets of the band are said on the opening night to have so startled the audience that they lost all power of attending to the other elements of the composer's grand vocal and instrumental combination. At the second representation they retained their nerve even beneath the warlike strains of the military instruments, and they at last recognised the fact that the new opera was one of its composer's finest and most dramatic productions. No work had ever before been produced with such an admirable assemblage of solo singers. A duet for Colbran and Davide and two beautiful airs for Pisaroni were particularly applauded. In after-years the part of Malcolm Graeme was sung with distinguished success by many an eminent contralto, with Alboni among the number.

It was a mistake on the part of Rossini, after

rejecting the classical and mythological subjects of his predecessors for plots by Shakespeare, Scott, and Beaumarchais, to turn back for an operatic theme to the "Semiramis" of Voltaire. In *Semiramide* the military band turns up again, and a new instrument, the key-bugle, is introduced. Again there is a very effective contralto part for a chivalrous youth. Indeed, the music of Arsace, the juvenile warrior, was as much admired as that of Semiramide, with her fine opening scena, "Bel raggio."

What, perhaps, was admired most of all was the long series of duets for the two women, one of whom represents a mere boy. The long and varied concerted finale of the first act is one of the features of the work, which, in spite of much rich, voluptuous music, is sadly wanting in dramatic interest. Once more the composer makes his mark with a fine overture, noticeable above all for its admirable movement in four-part harmony for the horns. Rossini had perhaps seen the score of the "Freischütz" overture, and wished to show that he also could write for what were his, as well as Weber's, favourite instruments.

*Semiramide* was the last opera composed by Rossini for Italy. It was produced at Venice in 1823, when the composer was in his thirty-second year.

Stendhal, thinking no doubt of the importance given to the orchestra, declared *Semiramide* to be written in the German style. Wagner was of opinion that it exhibited all the faults by which Italian Opera could possibly be distinguished.

## ROSSINI IN VIENNA, LONDON AND PARIS.

Throughout his artistic career, until the production of *William Tell*, Rossini's life involved him in much travelling of not too difficult a kind. Unlike France and England, Italy possessed, as she does still, some half-dozen musical capitals, and, as a composer eagerly sought for in each of them, Rossini had, after producing one work, say, at Venice, to bring out another at Milan, a third at Rome, a fourth at Bologna, a fifth at Florence, and a sixth at Naples.

But the colossal Barbaja stood with one foot at Naples and the other at Vienna, and he easily persuaded Rossini to visit the city of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, where the popular impresario wished the great composer to produce an opera written specially for the Austrian capital. *Zelmira* the work was called, and, though it never seems to have pleased Paris or London, Carpani declares it to have been one of the finest works Rossini ever composed.

To prepare it finally for a just reception at Vienna, where so many great works had been produced, *Zelmira* was put, at Bologna, through a trial performance, which was attended by the composer and his newly-married wife.

From Bologna the happy pair made their way to the Austrian capital, where *Zelmira* was performed with brilliant success. Rossini was visited by all the illustrious personages of Vienna. He had immediately after his arrival called on Beethoven, who, whatever he may have thought of some



other of Rossini's works, admired *The Barber of Seville*, and thought still better of it when, after hearing it on the stage, he examined it in the score.

Rossini's visit to Vienna led to his being invited to Verona, where the Congress was about to be held; and immediately afterwards an engagement for himself as composer, and for his wife as singer, was offered to him for the season of 1824 by Mr. Ebers, manager of the King's Theatre, the recognised home of Italian Opera in London.

Rossini accepted the proposal from London, and was told that the singers he would have to write for included, among others of almost equal celebrity, Madame Pasta and Madame Catalani. Theatrical property in London was, even in those distant days, estimated at a high value, for Mr. Ebers was charged £10,000 a year for his Opera House, which he only kept open during a season of four or five months—from January until May. Needless to say that no manager could pay such an exorbitant rent without being ruined.

Rossini's popularity in England was at this time unbounded. "So entirely did he engross the stage," writes Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "that the operas of no other masters were ever to be heard, with the exception only of those of Mozart; and of his only 'Don Giovanni' and 'Le Nozze di Figaro.' Every other composer, past and present, was totally put aside, and these two alone named or thought of."



Rossini's visit to London was expected with the deepest interest. At Verona, the composer had made the acquaintance of the Countess de Lieven, who took only too much interest in all diplomatic affairs. This did not prevent her from giving the great composer a letter of introduction to her husband, the Russian Ambassador in London, and Rossini had no sooner arrived than the Count hastened to call upon him. His Excellency had come not only on his own account, but also on the part of the King, to say that His Majesty desired to see the illustrious visitor before anyone else.

Rossini showed his appreciation of the King's gracious message by denying himself to everyone, and then starting with Count Lieven for Brighton, where he was presented to George IV., at the Pavilion. His Majesty was playing at cards with a lady. He received Rossini with great cordiality, and asked him to take a hand. But the composer excused himself, saying that he should be "afraid to play against so powerful an antagonist."

The King then suggested that Rossini might like to hear his band, and ordered Mayer, the conductor, to play the overture to *La Gazza Ladra*. Rossini assured one of his biographers, M. Azevedo, that the performance was excellent. On being asked to name a piece, the honoured guest called for "God save the King." He afterwards declared that, of all the Sovereigns he had ever met, Alexander I. of Russia and George IV. of England were the most engaging, and he assured

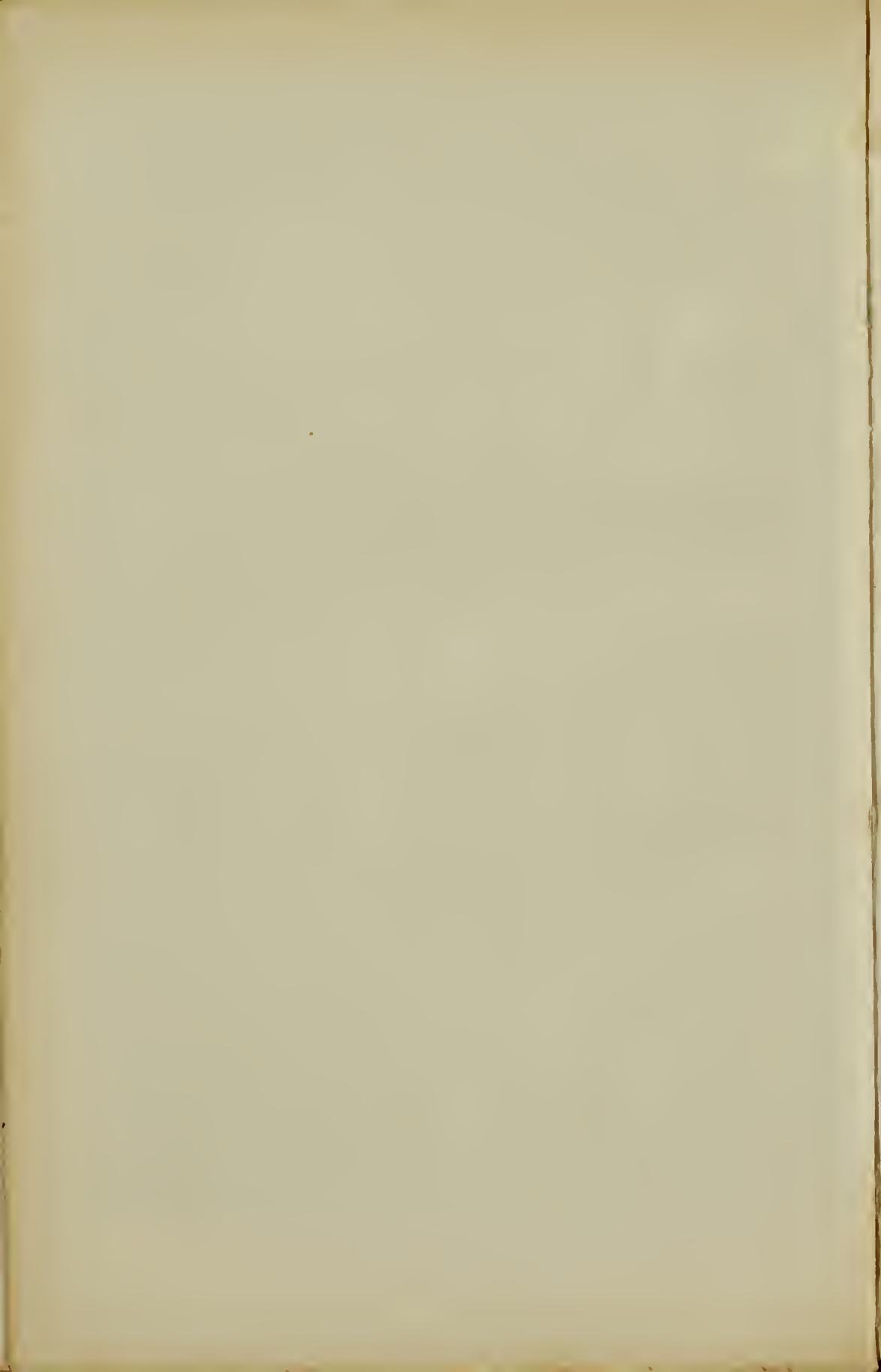
Ferdinand Hiller that of the charm of George IV.'s personal appearance and demeanour it was scarcely possible to form an idea.

The King presented Rossini to all the principal personages of the Court, and one effect of the introduction was the formation of a committee of lady patronesses, who organized two concerts at Almack's for Rossini's benefit, at 2 guineas a ticket. At the first of these concerts Rossini produced a cantata called *Homage to Byron*.

This was not, of course, the work which Mr. Ebers had invited him to compose. "Ugo, Re d'Italia" was, according to Mr. Ebers, the title of the projected opera, though M. Azevedo calls it, "La Figlia dell' Aria." The first act seems to have been composed, and the whole work announced for production, but nothing came of it. Meanwhile *Zelmira* was produced, with the former Mademoiselle Colbran in the principal part. But the music, though much admired by the elect, does not seem to have pleased the general public. Apparently the composer, in his desire to produce something worthy of so famous a musical city as Vienna, had studied more than was his wont to render his music appropriate to the subject, sacrificing beauty of melody to dramatic truth.

On the whole Rossini seems to have preserved a pleasing recollection of his visit to London, and of the £7,000 that he now carried away with him to Paris, where he had to write for the Italian theatre an opera in commemoration of the coronation of Charles X. *Il Viaggio a Reims* the





Miluzza amico e collega,

Mi corre debito di ringraziarvi per il magnifico  
Zomaggio Gibson che mi avete spedito, e qui dirò col Poeta

Dal dono imparo il donator qual sia.

Nella poffe dirvi ancora del di lui sapore poiché un Terribile  
raffreddore che mi affligge da ben dieci giorni me lo vieta, e  
nel mio egoismo non permetto che nessun mi preceda nel  
appagiarlo, fatta la prima esperienza mi presenterò a  
voi di nuovo con poche linee per dirvene la mia opinione  
ed esprimerne la mia gratitudine, cose tutte che potreb-  
bero darvi l'idea di un ritornello. L'anno venturo in simile  
epoca, associata però e preceduta da una vostra visita a  
Parigi cosa che mi è stata di somma consolazione: voi  
ben sapete quanta simpatia io sento per voi e qual confide-  
razione io abbia del vostro senno e sapere musicale, aggiungete  
ancora un Oratorio così vi troverete nella crescente fama  
il Successore di Handel (colosso) e di Haydn (Incantatore),  
questi sono i vaticinanti del

Vostro Affezionato Amico  
Gioachino Rossini

Ma non dimenticatevi di ricordarmi, ed  
io vi prego di esser amabili al vostro buon  
fratello.

Parigi 6 Nov<sup>bre</sup> 1830  
Ma Haydn è spesso con noi e potete figurarvi che chi l'ha parlato!!!





work was called, and probably much of the music consisted of pieces composed for the London opera which Rossini began, but never ended.

It is interesting to know that Rossini made in England the acquaintance of Bishop, whom he seems on one occasion to have remembered less by his ordinary designation than by one of his compositions. On meeting him in the street, "How are you?" he asked, with a little hesitation. Then, to show that he had not forgotten Bishop's identity, but only his name, he whistled the melody of the tuneful glee "When the wind blows," a compliment which the composer warmly appreciated.

Though he is said to have netted £7,000 in London, Rossini never made any considerable sum of money until he went to Paris! and he repaid his debt to the French not only by writing for them a series of magnificent works ending with *William Tell*, but by bringing, through direct invitation, to their capital Meyerbeer and Bellini; after which Donizetti, Flotow, and our own Balfe, came of their own accord.\*

In his first half-dozen operas Meyerbeer had shown himself an imitator and follower of Ros-

\* Balfe composed for the Opéra Comique of Paris two of his best works, "Le Puits d'Amour" and *Les Quatre Fils Aymon*." For the Grand Opera the less successful "Étoile de Seville," of which the music was substantially the same as that of "The Rose of Castile." Wallace, according to his friend Berlioz, was invited to compose a work for the Grand Opera, and a libretto was to have been officially forwarded to him. But he suddenly left Paris for some distant land without waiting for his opera book.

sini, but after hearing the "Freischütz" of his fellow-student Weber he determined to change his style, and to see whether he also could not make a striking operatic success with some legend of the supernatural for his subject. Scribe suggested the story of the wicked Duke of Normandy, father of William the Conqueror; and on the magical theme of Robert le Diable, the ingenious librettist and admirable composer went to work. Rossini had urged Meyerbeer to come to Paris. He did so, and two years after the production of *Guillaume Tell* brought out at the same theatre "Robert le Diable."

But while *William Tell* was the last of Rossini's operas, "Robert le Diable" was the first of Meyerbeer's, for henceforth Meyerbeer's previous operas were as though they had never existed. Rossini finished work at the age of thirty-seven. Meyerbeer began work at the age of forty.

Carl Maria von Weber, Meyerbeer's fellow-student under the Abbé Vogler (who, according to Mozart, was the driest theorist, the worst composer, and the most pretentious prig, that ever lived), had blamed Meyerbeer for following the example of Rossini, while condemning Rossini for writing *ad captandum* music with a view to immediate success. To Rossini he had some years later an opportunity of expressing his regret, when the Italian composer assured him that if at the time of *Tancredi* he had known that any German composer had done him the honour to criticise it he should have felt only too proud.

Had Weber lived to hear "Robert le Diable"

and "Les Huguenots," he would probably have forgiven Meyerbeer, as after hearing *The Barber* he forgave Rossini. Perhaps even he would have commended the fellow-student whom previously he had condemned.

In composing for the French stage, Rossini felt it necessary to be more dramatic than he had shown himself in operas written for Italian audiences, who, at least up to Rossini's time, cared less for verisimilitude than for sweet sounds. A taste, too, for simple expressive music had gradually grown upon him, and he is said to have held that with advancing years this tendency generally manifested itself.

At the Paris Opera House, moreover, he had a fine chorus and a magnificent orchestra to write for, while his French singers, though intelligent and well endowed as actors, were not such perfect vocalists as to tempt a composer to make sacrifices on their behalf. Any particular singers that he required were at once engaged. He felt himself, in fact, at the Paris Opera House absolutely free to write as he liked, the only inconvenience he had to put up with being the iron-bound leaden law by which he was compelled to introduce a ballet, and to put whatever he wished to compose into the regulation five acts, of which one effect is to prevent any work originally produced at the Paris Opera House from being performed at any other theatre in its complete form. A work of such portentous length must as a matter of course be "cut," and it cannot but suffer from the inevitable mutilation.

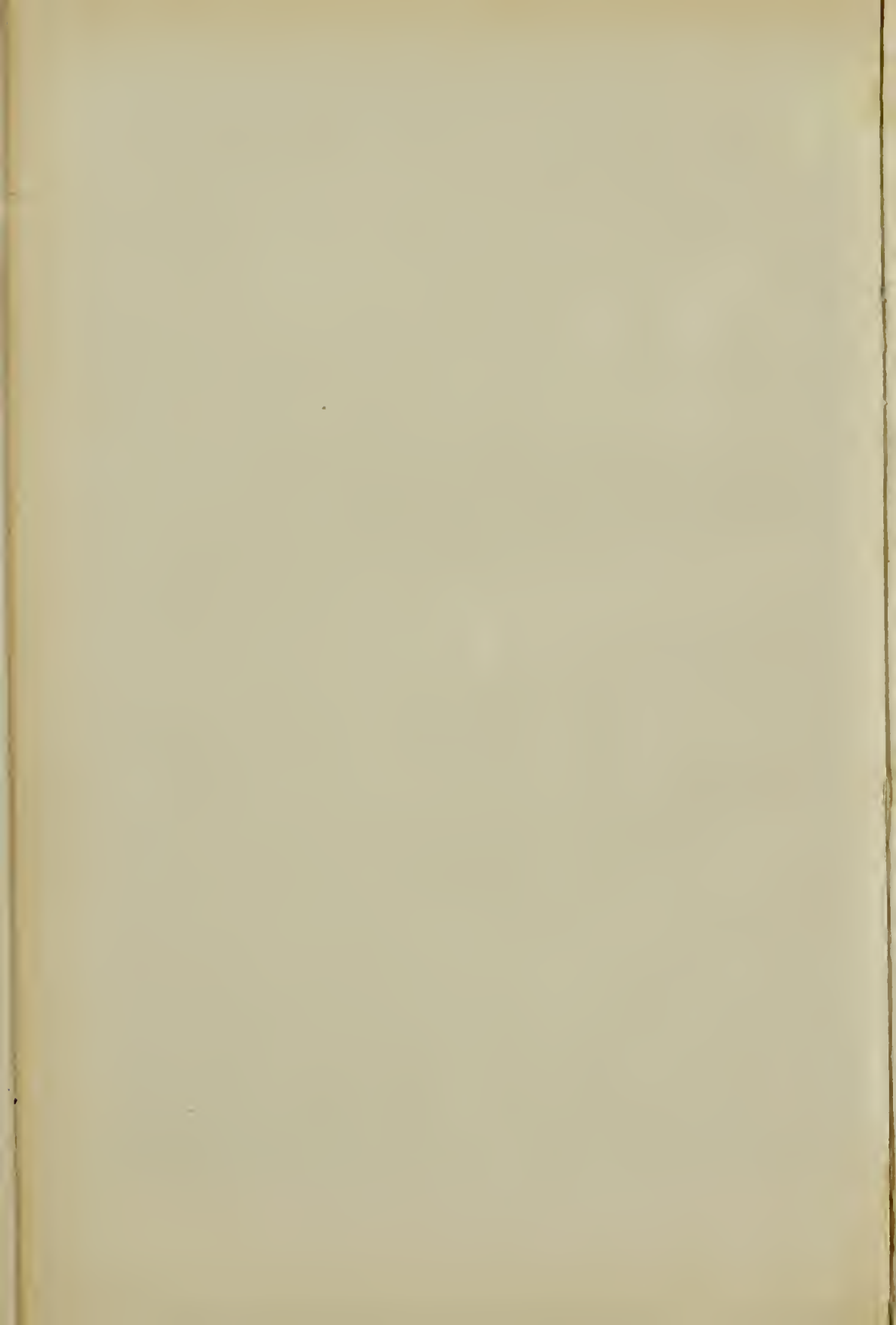
In preparing *Le Siège de Corinthe* and *Mosè* for the stage of the Paris Opera House, Rossini had to encumber the works on which these productions were based with masses of music, more or less appropriate. They kept up Rossini's reputation in the French capital, and brought him in something like £20 a night as composer's fees. The *Siege of Corinth*, moreover, was the first opera he ever sold to a music publisher. In Italy no publishers bought such things. They simply took possession of them, engraved them, sold them and pocketed the proceeds.

France possesses so many fine operas and such numbers of excellent plays because—to give one reason only—she rewards magnificently those who produce them.

The last opera that Rossini was to produce at the Paris Opera House was to be his masterpiece and the closing work of his career; and he obtained permission by way of exception to limit it to four acts. In *William Tell* the music suits not only the dramatic situations, but sometimes the very words, as, for example, the passionate heart-rending phrase composed to Arnold's exclamation, "Mon père, tu m'as maudit !" in the trio. One feels in this opera that the personages do not come upon the stage merely to sing cavatinas and entrance airs, nor to take part in duets, trios and concerted pieces merely that the public may be gratified by hearing this and that celebrated vocalist sing with others of equally high reputation. A solo piece in an opera may be







This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation, likely a score for the Overture to "Guillaume Tell". The notation is written on a system of eight staves, organized into four pairs. The notation is in a cursive, handwritten style, characteristic of 19th-century musical manuscripts. The first two staves of each pair appear to be for a melodic instrument, possibly a violin or flute, while the last two staves of each pair appear to be for a lower instrument, possibly a cello or double bass. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are several horizontal lines drawn across the staves, possibly indicating section breaks or rehearsal marks. The handwriting is somewhat slanted and the ink is dark, suggesting it was written with a quill or a fountain pen. The overall layout is clean and organized, typical of a professional musical score.



just as much in place as a monologue in a play. But it is not necessary in a serious dramatic work that a solo should consist of a slow movement and a quick one, nor that the whole should be preceded by so many bars of recitative.

In *William Tell* Rossini disregarded all conventions which would have prevented him from following the dramatic progress of the play he was setting to music, and Meyerbeer followed him in a course which was ultimately to be adopted by all composers claiming to produce musical works of a truly dramatic character.

Like nearly all Rossini's most important operas, *William Tell* was to be marked by the introduction of some new instrument into the orchestra; in this case the cornet, or rather two cornets, played by a couple of enterprising Italian brothers, who afterwards, when Rossini had introduced them to Meyerbeer, struck at the last rehearsal of "Robert le Diable" for an increase of salary, and of course obtained it. There were probably at that moment no other cornet-players in Paris, and Meyerbeer could no more have done without them in his new work than without his four kettle-drums or his newly-introduced organ.

Dr. Véron, for some time manager of the Paris Opera, gives us in his "Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris" an interesting example of Rossini's humour as shown at the first rehearsal of *William Tell*. He was seated on the stage, when suddenly he stopped the orchestra. Then he took a pinch of snuff and walked towards the musicians.



Finally he said to the first clarinet : " In that last passage, Monsieur Da Costa, you played a magnificent F sharp. It should be F natural. Oblige me by playing F natural. I will give you an opportunity of placing your F sharp elsewhere."

Many years passed before *William Tell*, as a whole, became known outside France ; but the Tyrolienne from the ballet music captivated everyone who heard it, and the overture took all Europe by storm.

The overture to *William Tell* is Rossini's nearest approach to programme music, and all that he wishes to set forth is indicated by the simplest means : the oppression and grief of the Swiss people by the complaining strains of the cello, the summoning of the cantons by the "ranz des vaches," the rising of the nation by the trumpet-call, the final victory of the Swiss by the triumphal march.

*William Tell* was the finest and most inspiring subject that Rossini had yet had to treat ; but MM. de Jouy and Hippolyte Bis, who had undertaken the task of turning Schiller's play into an opera book, were far from being the most accommodating poets who had ever furnished him with "words for music." M. de Jouy, in particular, stood on his dignity as a man of letters, and did not like the idea of breaking up his heroic lines to suit the varied rhythms of Rossini's musical pieces. Ultimately the two librettists sacrificed themselves with the best grace they could command, though in publishing their "book" they

took care to inform the public that it was a much finer work as they had originally written it.

One of the numerous anecdotes circulated in connection with the first performance of the opera was to the effect that cries of "Bis ! bis !" having been raised, in token of a desire to hear a certain piece a second time M. Hippolyte Bis appeared on the stage, under the impression that he had been specially called for.

At Rossini's funeral, St. Georges, the eminent dramatist, made a speech, in which he said that if after the composer's death the second act of *William Tell*, the last act of *Otello*, and *The Barber* as a whole, should still be remembered, that was all Rossini in his excessive modesty had looked forward to.

*William Tell* and *The Barber* both survive in their entirety ; nor would the beautiful and touching last act of *Otello* be forgotten if managers here and there would give it, from time to time, a chance of being heard.

After *William Tell* Rossini produced nothing of importance except the *Stabat Mater* in 1842, and the three choruses for women's voices, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, the year afterwards : originally intended, it may be, for the *Stabat Mater*, in which the third chorus might fitly have been placed.

The *Stabat Mater*, still sung in London every Christmas and Easter at several different concert-halls, is to most of our music-lovers better known than *The Barber*, and far better than *William Tell*. Much of it is theatre music rather than church

music. But the same may be said of the Masses of Haydn, and even of Mozart. As regards the not too devotional "Cujus animam," it should be remembered that our tenors, for their own convenience, sing the air twice as fast as Rossini intended.

In 1847 Rossini composed some *Stanzas* addressed to Pius IX., and in 1864, four years before his death, a *missa solennis* on a small scale, entitled *Petite Messe Solennelle*, which was performed for the first time in the presence of Meyerbeer, Auber, and a few private friends. The *Messe* had not at that time been arranged for the orchestra, and the instrumentation of the work occupied the composer from time to time almost until his death in 1868.

If anyone asks why, after *William Tell*, Rossini ceased to occupy himself seriously with musical composition, he may be reminded of the Man in the Iron Mask, the authorship of Junius' letters, and other mysteries, concerning which Lord Beaconsfield warned the young man about to enter society not to show himself too curious.

There are a dozen explanations of Rossini's silence, none of them satisfactory, and some—such as his alleged jealousy of Meyerbeer—perfectly absurd. He had already composed forty operas when he gave up work. His inactivity was the consequence of no sudden resolution. He had engaged to supply the Paris Opera House with two more works—according to some authorities three, and even five. Several libretti were submitted to him, and he entertained

for some time the idea of setting "Faust" to music. It would have been interesting to hear the fantastic strains which his treatment of a supernatural subject would, for the first time, have demanded from him. But "Faust" at the moment was not merely a popular subject. It had been made commonplace through being presented at so many different theatres in so many different forms.

It was thought, when Duprez appeared and made a striking success in the part of Arnold, that the renewed enthusiasm thus created for the opera of *William Tell* would urge the composer to fresh efforts. But he was not to be moved.

"Rossini's mind," wrote Ferdinand Hiller in 1849, when the great Rossinian question was being agitated, as it continued to be until the fatal year of 1868, "is still what it always was ; his wit, his memory, his lively powers of narration, are undiminished ; and, as he has written nothing for twenty years, he has at least not given anyone the right of asserting that his musical genius has deteriorated : the last work he wrote was *William Tell*."

*William Tell* continues to hold its place at the Paris Opera side by side with Meyerbeer's works, and it is as modern in construction as any of them. *The Barber* is still as full of life and vivacity as when it was first composed, and one may still say of Rossini's music, in the words of Théophile Gautier, written long ago, "It will never be old-fashioned ; it will suddenly become antique."



To return for a moment to Rossini's personal life : his first wife, the beautiful Madame Colbran, died in 1845, and two years afterwards he married Madame Olympe Pellissier, who survived him.

His parents were not well off. But his own natural genius was enough to inspire him with a desire to succeed, and from the time of his student days he never knew poverty. His first opera brought him only £20, *Tancredi* £40, *The Barber* £80 ; and *William Tell* £10,000—from the Paris Opera alone. The five hundredth representation of Rossini's greatest work was given on February 10, 1868—the year of his death—on which occasion a gold laurel wreath was offered to him by the singers, his bust being at the same time placed in the vestibule of the theatre.

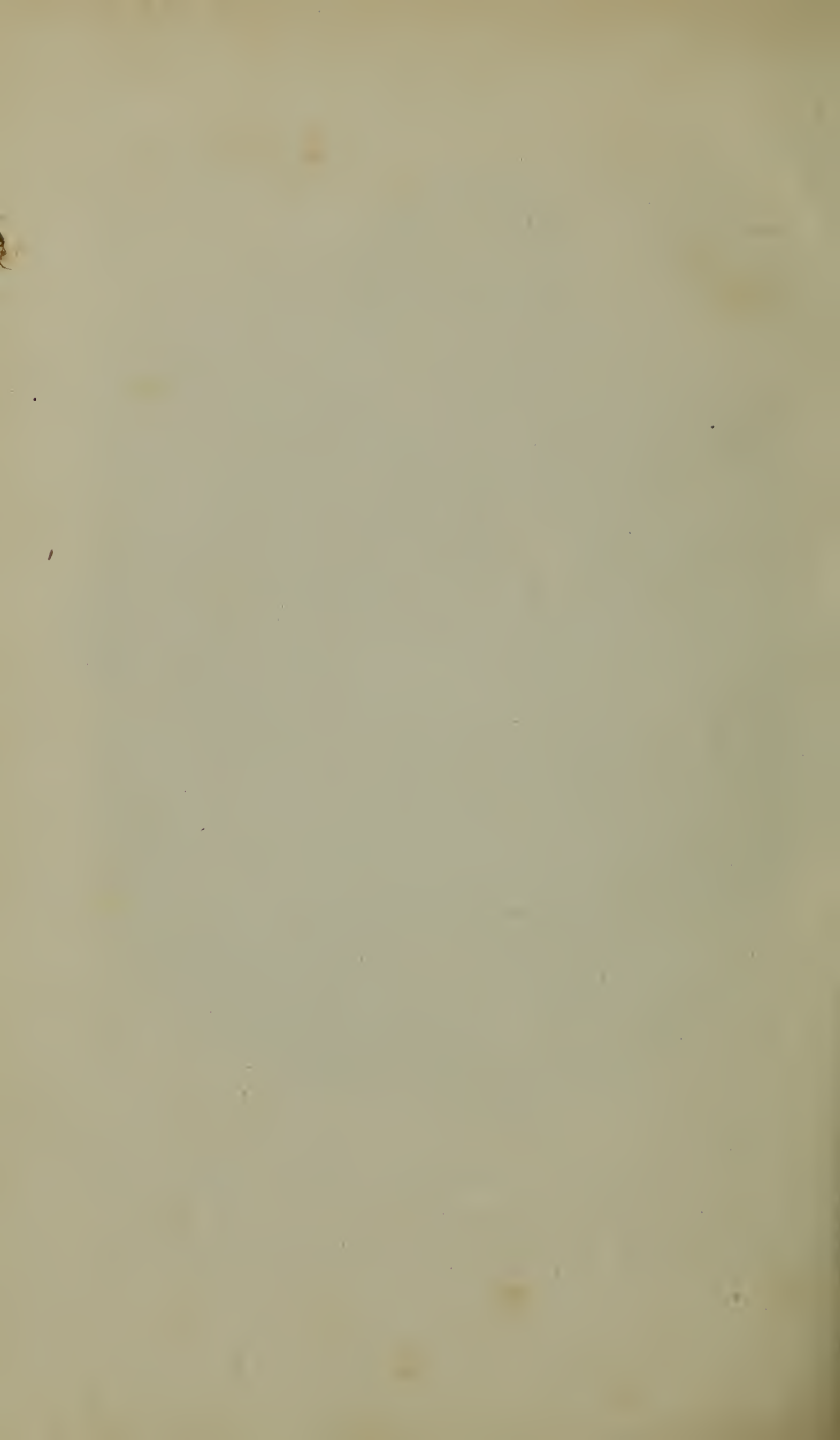
Rossini cared no more for display, for the sumptuous life of the modern millionaire, than did Verdi, the most important of his Italian successors ; and he was as solicitous even as Verdi for the welfare of professional musicians. He never took the trouble to spend any considerable portion of the very large income which his works earned for him after his arrival in France—where much more than in any other country art of every kind is favoured by legislation. But he endowed a school of music at his native Pesaro, and his widow, in conformity with his wishes, left 5,000,000 francs for the establishment at Auteuil of an asylum for aged and distressed musicians of French or Italian nationality.

It has been already stated that Rossini's artistic career terminated when he was but thirty-seven,





PORTRAIT OF ROSSINI ABOUT 1860.



though he had still some forty years to live. The events of these have but little interest for the student. Rossini was still at Paris when his mother died at Bologna in 1827. Anxious to see his father once more, he resigned his office as Inspector of Singing. While at Bologna he was much upset by the abdication of Charles X., and returning to Paris in 1830, he remained there for six years. During this period he was compelled to bring an action to enforce the agreement he had made, to write exclusively for the Paris Opera during a period of ten years, commencing in 1829, and to produce at least five operas during the existence of the agreement. Fortunately, he won his action, which involved a considerable sum of money. He remained in Paris for the purpose of hearing "Les Huguenots," and then returned to Bologna. In 1839 his father died. In 1847 he went to Florence. Eight years later he left his native country for ever. During the remainder of his life he lived either in Paris or at Passy, and his drawing-room became the rendezvous of much of the artistic and all the musical world.

It was at his villa at Passy that he passed away on Friday, November 13, 1868; unlucky day both as to the day of the week and month. His funeral, which took place at "La Trinite" on November 21, was imposing in the extreme. An array of operatic stars, never again to be assembled, took part in the ceremony, with Madame Adelina Patti at the head of them. Probably no one has done more to keep Rossini's music before the public than this great artist.

## ROSSINI AS OPERATIC REFORMER

Handel, Gluck, and Mozart studied operatic art in Italy, and composed their first operas to Italian libretti for performance by Italian singers at Italian opera houses.

Rossini was the first Italian composer who went to the Germans for instruction ; and for nearly the whole of his operatic reforms he was indebted to Mozart, whose works (including "Zauberflöte") he had studied in score, and whose two acknowledged masterpieces, "The Marriage of Figaro" and "Don Giovanni," he had heard at Milan in 1814 and 1815. This was just before he set to work on *The Barber of Seville*, which he began in the last days of 1815, and produced at the beginning of February in the year following.

As regards the *opera seria* of his native land, Rossini not only reformed, but revolutionized it, and it was as "revolutionist" that he was both attacked and defended when his works were discussed in print ; which happened from 1824 onwards to an extent absolutely unprecedented, and never afterwards surpassed, equalled, or approached, except in the transcendent case of Wagner.

To those who were already familiar with the operas of Mozart there was nothing new in those of Rossini—at least, up to the time of *Mosè in Egitto* (1818), when he introduced his famous choral prayer, afterwards to be imitated by so many great composers, including in particular



Meyerbeer, who introduces as many as three *preghiere* in his last work, "L'Africaine."

Rossini's reforms (including total suppression of the male sopranist—the curse of Italian Opera for more than a century—employment of bass singers in leading parts, and replacement of the justly named "secco" recitative by recitative with orchestral accompaniment) had in Italy the effect of driving all other composers off the stage; while in London, where at our long-established Opera House the taste of Italy was more or less reflected, it is recorded that during one particular season, with the exception of Mozart's two master-pieces, no operas were played but those of Rossini.\*

In comic opera Rossini's melodies were brighter and more rhythmical than those of his predecessors, but the principal changes he introduced in this department, as into that of serious opera, were in connection with the orchestra, into which, to the dismay of the more pedantic among his countrymen, he introduced new instruments of wood and brass, including all the instruments of the military band.

In Italy, until Rossini's time, *opera seria*, with the leading character in every work assigned to the male sopranist (who was permitted to adorn or disfigure all his airs with elaborate variations of his own contrivance), and with an orchestra composed in some cases of strings, flutes, haut-boys, and bassoons, but for the most part of strings alone, had really no serious existence.

\* Lord Mount Edgcumbe's 'Reminiscences.'



Fortunately for opera-buffa the artificial soprano was too haughty to condescend to so mean a style. But in *opera seria*, besides taking the leading part—usually an heroic one—he also sang the highest part in the quartett, while the second part was assigned to a contralto. This curious arrangement of the voices suggests our burlesques of a bygone age, in which male parts were given to women, female parts to men.

The tenor in the operatic scheme of the days before Rossini filled the third part in the quartett, and was usually the representative of some inferior personage in the piece; while the fourth part was given, of course, to the bass, whose gruff voice was considered too unladylike for solo-singing, and who was used only as fundamental support of the quartett.

Of all Rossini's operatic reforms, the first and most important was the ejection of the male sopranist, which was effected once and for all when the composer refused the part of Tancredi to the celebrated Velluti.

Meyerbeer went on writing for the man with the woman's voice, and for that same Velluti until 1824, when the last of the sopranists appeared in Meyerbeer's final Italian opera, "*Il Crociato*."

In *Otello* Rossini gave for the first time in serious opera the principal part to a tenor. In the works of his predecessors the male sopranist had put everything wrong, and it was not until he had been done away with that due importance could be given to singers with such voices as

those of Garcia, Nozzari, David, Nourrit, Duprez, Mario, Tamberlik, Tamagno, and Caruso.

Rossini invented the *primo tenore*, and since his *Otello* no Italian composer except Verdi in "Macbetto," and no German composer of the first rank except Meyerbeer in "L'Étoile du Nord" and "Dinorah," and Wagner in "The Flying Dutchman," has ever written an opera in which the principal male part is not given to a tenor.

Some time passed before Rossini ventured to assign the part of heroine to a soprano, and when he did so (in *Matilda di Sabran*) there was a fight on the subject outside the doors of the San Carlo Opera House.

In reforming the *opera seria* in Italy and placing it for the first time on something like a reasonable basis, Rossini had little to do but to follow Mozart. Italy's richness in tenors enabled him, however, to go beyond Mozart in regard to the assignment of parts to voices; so that since Rossini's time soprano, tenor, baritone, and bass have been the main supports of opera, even as columbine, harlequin, clown, and pantaloon, have, since the Middle Ages, been the main supports of pantomime.

One word more as to Rossini's composition of the orchestra. After adopting all Mozart's instruments, he introduced several which in the time of Mozart were unknown, such as the key-bugle in *Semiramide*, the basset-horn and cornet in *William Tell*.

France is probably the only country in the present day where Rossini is justly appreciated,

probably because it is the only country where *William Tell* is constantly played. It has figured of late almost weekly in the bills of the Paris Opera House side by side with "Lohengrin" and "Les Huguenots," though many years have passed since it was given in London. In England, on the other hand, *The Barber of Seville* is heard from time to time, if not *William Tell*. Apart from these two masterpieces, the music of Rossini is everywhere dead—killed in a great measure by its own floridity.

In the musical comedy of *Il Barbiere* (Rossini once called it "a musical farce") florid music is not out of place. In *Guillaume Tell* it does not exist.

To those who have never heard Rossini's greatest work, it is as a composer of florid music that he is above all known, and it is difficult in the present day to determine to what extent he should be condemned for writing so much unnecessary vocalization. That the singers desired it, and insisted on having it for purposes of display, is the explanation given by Stendhal, who here, as in most places, repeats the words of Carpani, the true author of nearly everything that the writer of so many brilliant novels has published on the subject of music.

According to the Stendhal-Beyle-Carpani view of the matter, the leading singers, and especially the gentleman with the lady's voice, embroidered their airs so unmercifully that beneath their elaborate ornamentation the original melody was lost. Rossini then said: "If they will have

these decorations, I will supply the *fioriture* myself, and so profusely that it will be impossible for them to add anything of their own." There are critics, for the most part German, who assert that Rossini by his flowery embellishments degraded the character of Italian song. But the simple themes of some of his predecessors, innocent as they may look on the music-paper, were made meretricious by the executants. The music of Cimarosa as disfigured in the florid variations of a male sopranist was no longer the music of Cimarosa alone.

Too much has been made of the readiness with which Rossini transferred pieces from one opera to another, a process of which he made no secret. He was annoyed all the same when early works, which he looked upon as forgotten and had purposely never sent to the engravers, were published without his sanction, containing pieces that he had introduced into later works. Now that it has become the custom to publish everything, composers no longer transfer pieces from one opera to another. But in former days they did so freely enough. Handel borrowed from the operas he had produced in Italy to enrich the oratorios he was bringing out in England. Gluck, who laid so much stress on the dramatic appropriateness by which all operatic music should be marked, treated what had been composed for a particular situation in one work as equally suitable for a different situation in another; and it is known to many musicians that Bach in his B minor Mass borrowed both



from his "Patriotic Cantata" composed in honour of King Augustus of Poland and from his "Ascension Day Oratorio."

*Guillaume Tell*, at all events, is an opera in which the music has been composed throughout for the personages and for the dramatic situations, and not in any one scene or song with a view to mere vocalization. It is a sort of legacy, on the part of Rossini, exhibiting in one great work all his virtues as a dramatic composer, with none of his vices as a writer of show-pieces for Italian vocalists.

10, Février 1868  
500<sup>e</sup> Rep.<sup>on</sup> de Guillaume Tell  
à M<sup>r</sup> Jacobi.

*Souvenir Reconnaissant*

G. Rossini

SIGNATURE OF THE COMPOSER ATTACHED TO A  
SOUVENIR GIVEN BY HIM TO M. JACOBI.



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## LIST OF ROSSINI'S OPERAS

| OPERA.   | FIRST REPRESENTATION.                    | FIRST PERFORMANCE IN LONDON. |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| <i>Adelaide di Borgogna</i> , or<br><i>Ottone, Re d' Italia</i> ...            | Rome, Car., 1818.                        |                              |
| <i>Adina</i> (farsa) ...   | Lisbon, 1818.                            |                              |
| <i>Armida</i> ...  | Naples, November 9, 1817.                | June 5, 1834.                |
| <i>Assedio di Corinto, L'</i> ...  | Milan, December 26, 1828                 | June 22, 1826.               |
| <i>Aureliano in Palmira</i> ...  | Milan, December 26, 1813                 | January 27, 1818.            |
| <i>Barbiere di Siviglia, Il</i> ...  | Rome, February 5, 1816 ;<br>Paris, 1824. |                              |
| <i>Bianca e Faliero</i> ...  | Milan, December 26, 1819.                |                              |
| <i>Bruschino, Il Signor</i> (farsa) ...  | Venice, Car., 1813.                      |                              |
| <i>Cambiale di Matrimonio, La</i><br>(farsa) ...                               | Venice, Aut., 1810.                      |                              |
| <i>Cambio della Valigia, Il</i> , or<br><i>L' Occasione</i> , etc. (farsa) ... | Venice, 1812.                            |                              |
| <i>Cenerentola, La</i> ...   | Rome, Car., 1817 ...                     | January 8, 1820.             |
| <i>Conte Ory, Le</i> ...   | Paris, August 20, 1828 ...               | February 28, 1829.           |
| <i>Conte Ory, Il...</i> ...  | Milan, 1828 (?)                          |                              |
| <i>Dame du Lac, La</i> ...   | Paris, October 21, 1825.                 |                              |

|                                      |     |  |     |  |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--|-----|--|
| <i>Demetrio e Polibio</i> ...        | ... | Rome, Aut., 1812.                        | ... | February 18, 1823.                           |
| <i>Donna del Lago, La</i>            | ... | Naples, October 4, 1819 ;<br>Paris, 1825 | ... |  |
| <i>Edoardo e Cristina</i> ...        | ... | Venice, Car., 1819.                      | ... |  |
| <i>Elisabetta</i> ...                | ... | Naples, Aut., 1815 ...                   | ... | April 20, 1818.                              |
| <i>Equivoco stravagante</i>          | ... | Bologna, Aut., 1811.                     | ... |  |
| <i>Ermione</i> ...                   | ... | Naples, Lent, 1819.                      | ... |  |
| <i>Figlio per Azzardo, Il</i>        | ... | 1813.                                    | ... |  |
| <i>Gazza Ladra, La</i> ...           | ... | Milan, May 31, 1817                      | ... | March 10, 1821.                              |
| <i>Gazzetta, La</i> ...              | ... | Naples, 1816.                            | ... |  |
| <i>Guillaume Tell</i> ...            | ... | Paris, August 3, 1829                    | ... | July, 1839.                                  |
| <i>Inganno felice, L' (farsa)</i>    | ... | Venice, Car., 1812 ...                   | ... | July 1, 1819.                                |
| <i>Italiana in Algeri, L'</i>        | ... | Venice, 1813                             | ... | January 27, 1819.                            |
| <i>Maometto Secondo</i> ...          | ... | Naples, Car., 1820.                      | ... |  |
| <i>Matilde di Shabran</i> ...        | ... | Rome, Car., 1821 ...                     | ... | July 3, 1823.                                |
| <i>Mathilde de Sabran</i> ...        | ... | Paris, 1857.                             | ... |  |
| <i>Moïse</i> ...                     | ... | Paris, March 27, 1827.                   | ... |  |
| <i>Mosè in Egitto (2 or 4 acts)</i>  | ... | Naples, Lent, 1818.                      | ... | ( <i>Pietro l'Ermita</i><br>April 23, 1822). |
| Ditto (second Italian libretto)      | ... | Paris, 1827.                             | ... |  |
| <i>Occasione fa il Ladro, L', or</i> | ... | Venice, Aut., 1812.                      | ... |  |
| <i>Il cambo, etc. (farsa)</i>        | ... | Naples, December 4, 1816.                | ... | May 6, 1822.                                 |
| <i>Otello</i> ...                    | ... |  | ... |  |



LIST OF ROSSINI'S OPERAS—*continued*

| OPERA.  | FIRST REPRESENTATION.        | FIRST PERFORMANCE IN LONDON. |  |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
|   |                              |                              |  |
| <i>Ottone, Re d' Italia</i> (see <i>Ade-<br/>laidé</i> ). |                              |                              |  |
| <i>Pietra del Paragone, La</i> ...                        | Milan, September 26, 1812.   |                              |  |
| <i>Pietro l' Eremita</i> ...                              | ... ..                       | April 23, 1822.              |  |
| <i>Pie voleuse, La</i> ...                                | Paris, 1822.                 |                              |  |
| <i>Ricciardo e Zoraide</i> ...                            | Naples, December 3, 1818     | June 5, 1823.                |  |
| <i>Robert Bruce</i> ...                                   | Paris, December 30, 1846.    |                              |  |
| <i>Scala di Seta, La</i> (farsa)                          | Venice, Car., 1812.          |                              |  |
| <i>Semiramide</i> ...                                     | Venice, February 3, 1823 ... | July 15, 1824.               |  |
| <i>Semiramis</i> ...                                      | Paris, July 9, 1860          |                              |  |
| <i>Siège de Corinthe, Le</i> ...                          | Paris, October 9, 1826       |                              |  |
| <i>Sigismondo</i> ...                                     | Venice, Car., 1815.          |                              |  |
| <i>Tancredi</i> ...                                       | Venice, Car., 1813 ...       | May 4, 1820.                 |  |
| <i>Torvaldo e Dorliska</i>                                | Rome, December 26, 1815.     |                              |  |
| <i>Turco in Italia, Il</i> ...                            | Milan, August 14, 1814 ...   | May 19, 1821.                |  |
| <i>Zelmira</i> ...  | Naples, December, 1821 ...   | January 24, 1824.            |  |

## CANTATAS, ORATORIOS, VOCAL AND OTHER WORKS.

- Augurio felice, L.* Verona, 1823.  
*Bardo, Il.* Verona, 1823.  
*Didone abbandonata.* Bologna, 1811.  
*Pastori, I.* Naples, 1820.  
*Pianto delle Muse, Il.* London, 1823.  
*Riconoscenza, La.* Naples, 1821.  
*Sacra Alleanza, La.* Verona, 1823.  
*Vero Ommaggio, Il.* Verona, 1823.  
*Ciro in Babilonia* (oratoria). Ferrara, Lent, 1812.  
*Il Pianto d'Armonia per la Morte di Orfeo.*  
 Bologna. August, 1808.  
*Il viaggio a Reims.* Paris, June, 1825.  
*Igea.* Naples, 1819.  
*Inno popolare.* Bologna, 1815.  
*Inno popolare.* 1820.  
*À Lord Byron.* London, 1823.  
*À Napoléon III. et à son vaillant Peuple.* Paris,  
 July 1, 1867.  
*Teti e Peleo.* Naples, April, 1816.  
*Cantata in honour of the King of Naples.* Feb-  
 ruary 20, 1819.  
*Cantata in honour of the Emperor of Austria.*  
 Naples, May 9, 1819.  
*Stances à Pie IX.* 1847.  
*Stabat Mater,* 1841.  
*La Foi, L'Espérance, et la Charité.* Instru-  
 mented by Balbi. 1844.  
*Petite Messe solennelle.* 1864.

*Tantum ergo.* For two tenors and bass with orchestra. Composed at Bologna, and performed November 28, 1847, for the re-establishment of the services in the Church of S. Francesco dei Minori Conventuali.

*Quoniam.* Bass solo and orchestra.

*O Salutaris*, four solo voices. Published at Paris in *La Maîtrise*. Reproduced in facsimile by Azevedo in his "Rossini."

*Messe solennelle.*

*Sinfonia.*

*Messa scritta per Ravenna.*

*Serate Musicali.* 1835.

*Pezzi per Pianoforte e varie altre Composizioni.*

*Gorgheggi e Solfeggi.* A collection of exercises for the voice.

*Non posso, o Dio, resistere.* Cantata.

*Oh, quanto son grate.* Duettino.

*Irene ed Egle.* Cantata for soprano and mezzo-soprano. 1814.

*Ridiamo cantiano.*

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